

**Nebraska Information Technology Commission
State Government Council**

Online Business Registration Work Group

**Thursday June 24, 2004, 9:00 A.M. to Noon
Nebraska State Office Building, Sixth Floor Conference Room 6Y
301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln**

Minutes

A. Participants:

Name	Agency
Armstrong, Rod	Nebrask@ Online
Arp, Dale	Secretary of State
Barrett, Karen	Revenue
Becker, Rick	NITC/CIO
Gibbs, Doug	Nebrask@ Online
Harris, Glenn	Small Business Admin.
Hattan, Jill	Labor
Hightshoe, Melodee	Labor
Lamberson, Tom	Environmental Quality
Mandava, Eshwar	Labor
McCormick, Sherry	Revenue
Pester, Deb	Secretary of State
Schafer, Steve	CIO
Sloup, Len	Revenue
Taylor, Linda	Agriculture
Williams, Steve	Economic Development

B. Review Charter and Purpose

Steve Schafer reviewed the history and purpose of this endeavor. The state's e-government strategic plan recommended "an online system for business registration." In addition, Nebraska Interactive proposed an online business registration system as part of the statement of work for its contract with the State Records Board. In May 2004, the State Government Council created the Business Registration Work Group. A charter of the work group is available as a link to the May 2004 agenda of the State Government Council (<http://www.nitc.state.ne.us/sgc/>)

The Work Group is tasked with developing recommendations on all aspects of the project, including:

- Overall architecture
- Content and process flow
- Functional requirements

- Technical requirements
- Authentication and security.

The system is intended to be expandable and include additional functions of local, state, and federal agencies in the future.

C. Discuss Other State's Online Systems

Steve Schafer explained that the Internet connection to NSOB 6Y was not working. He distributed a set of copies of web pages for business portals and online registration systems at Kansas, Utah, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Maryland. Each has features that might be worth considering for implementation in Nebraska:

1. Kansas: <https://www.accesskansas.org/businesscenter/index.html>. This site includes:
 - Name availability search
 - Ability to reserve a name for up to 120 days (for a fee)
 - File business tax registration
 - Register unemployment tax
 - Online demonstrations of each of the business registration filings
 - A "businessfolio", which retains copies of previous transactions and other information for each profile established by the user.
2. Utah (<http://www.utah.gov/business/main/index>)
 - Comprehensive business portal that provides sections for "Starting a Business", "Running a Business", "Relocating a Business", and "Closing a Business."
 - Online business registration that includes the Utah State Tax Commission, Utah Labor Commission, Utah Department of Commerce, Utah Department of Workforce Services, and the Utah Department of Environmental Quality. The system uses an interview process.
 - Renewal and Multiple Renewal Options
 - License renewal system for most licensed occupations and professions
3. Pennsylvania (<http://www.paopen4business.state.pa.us/paofb/site/default.asp>)
 - Comprehensive business portal that provides access to business information, including financial options, download forms for starting and expanding a business, and online registration for the Departments of Labor, Revenue and State. The system uses an interview process.
 - Resources include information for developing a business plan, determining the business structure, and obtaining financial resources.
 - "PA Open for Business Help" via e-mail or telephone.
 - Information and assistance wizard.
 - "PA Open for Business Briefcase."
 - FAQs for Starting a Business, Choosing a Business Structure, Choosing a Business Name, Business Taxes, Financial Incentives, Assistance and Grants, Site Assistance, and Local Government Information.
 - Online Business Registration Interview

4. Ohio: <https://ohiobusinessgateway.ohio.gov/>
 - 1st Stop Business Connection that provides state-level information for starting or continuing a business.
 - Business information kit that is tailored to the user's needs, based on a choice among scores of types of businesses, from acupuncture to petting zoos.
 - Choice of downloading or mailing the business start-up kit.
 - Ohio Business Gateway, which allows existing businesses to simultaneously report and pay tax liabilities associated with Workers' Compensation, Unemployment Tax, Payroll Withholding Tax, and Sales Tax.
 - Links to other sources of information, including Ohio State Government, Small Business Administration, BusinessLaw.Gov, IRS.

5. Maryland: www.maryland.gov/ .
 - Central Business Portal that includes information about starting a business, relocating a business, operating a business, and state procurement opportunities. The business portal includes links for assessments and taxation, business development, and one stop shop for business assistance.
 - The Business License Information System provides information and links for starting a business. Features include:
 - (1) Register a business name
 - (2) Form a legal entity
 - (3) Obtain a trade name application
 - (4) Obtain a Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN)
 - Online Search of Building and Site information
 - Online queries of licensed professionals
 - ChooseMaryland.org site, which provides extensive information about the business climate in Maryland.

D. Discussion

Rod Armstrong proposed using a phased approach to the project. Phase I might be a simple website with information about starting up a business. Phase II might provide an interview tool for providing information tailored to the needs of a specific business. Phase III would include backend integration with existing systems, including some automation of processes that are now manual.

Although the Utah application is available to us at no cost, we are not limited to that system and can modify it to meet our needs. The Kansas application is also available to Nebraska@ Online.

Comments and concerns included the following points:

- Don't overburden the users with questions
- Focus on common requirements rather than unique issues that affect only a few businesses
- Avoid requiring the user to register before being able to access the system.
- Avoid a lengthy interview process.
- Keep the system intuitive, quick to use, and insure a rapid response

- Provide the user with contact information, including e-mail and telephone numbers, with the option to “bail-out” at any point.
- Make use of existing resources, such as the IRS Federal ID Tax application. The second page of the chart should be incorporated into Nebraska’s system.
- The one stop online business registration system should be another option. It should not replace existing systems such as UI Connect.
- The system should allow renewals and name changes, which represent the greatest volume of interaction with agencies.
- The project should try to address the problem of identifying businesses and business addresses across agencies.
- The US Department of Agriculture – Rural Institute should be involved, because they assist many businesses.
- Identify key “packages” for the most common types of businesses.
- Follow the UI Connect approach – start basic (simple and clean), add features based on demand, and keep the process short (10 minutes).
- Agency web sites should provide cross references in FAQs to other agencies and common information needs.
- Re-examine existing paper forms and processes, before implementing an automated system.

E. Next Steps

1. NOL will begin meeting with agencies to gather information.
2. Steve Schafer will contact Jim Barr at USDA and invite them to participate
3. The next meeting will be in about a month to monitor progress and gather more input regarding requirements.